

Historic Conditions Report: Above-Ground Archaeological Investigations  
of the Old Treasury Building, Maryland State House Grounds



Conducted for State of Maryland  
Department of General Services  
Alvin C. Collins, Secretary  
DGS Project Number BA-491-070-203

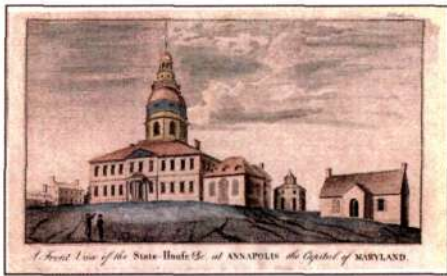
Report Produced by John Greenwalt Lee Company  
Lead Investigator: Charles A. Phillips, AIA, AIC

November 24, 2008

## Project Overview:

Following removal of the tar and cement plaster from the interior walls that had caused damaged to the masonry, our team was asked to investigate the walls of the Old Treasury to determine as much about its earlier appearances as possible. More information is being collected as the year progresses, including from below-grade archaeology conducted as part of the grade lowering and exterior masonry repair project underway at the same time.

Built around 1735 as the state treasury, the building's masonry and construction methods are indicative of the coarser grade of materials available at that time, nearly fifty years before construction of the current State House (the third on this site). The earliest archival records indicate that robbers were at the door soon after and several early modifications were made to keep intruders at bay. One of the more significant early changes to the building occurred on the exterior with considerable amounts of dirt imported to raise the height of the mound on which the third State House was to be built as part of a project to make the government's position in town more imposing.



Charles Willson Peale's 1789 engraving shows the bare muddy ground around the new State House that occurred with the artificial creation of a high focal point for the new government complex which included a grade rise around the Treasury that apparently once sat high on a small knoll. Recent archaeology found mostly clean fill on the site, with only mid-nineteenth and twentieth century pipes and alterations. This despite the fact the grade against the building in early 2008 created a diminutive, half-buried appearance to the Old Treasury similar to that depicted by Peale in 1789.

Although the Treasury was built with impermeable stone foundations, grades invariably continue to rise over time and by mid- to late-nineteenth century, soil buried nearly half of the perimeter brickwork. With uphill water draining toward the Treasury and held against the porous brickwork by wet earth, the building increasingly had moisture problems in the twentieth century, made worse by attempts to remedy the situation with non-porous repointing mortars and impervious interior coatings.

In spite of physical assaults, decades of moth-balling, and several significant twentieth century alterations for later occupants, the Old Treasury masonry survives in remarkably good shape. On its walls and within the openings for doors and windows are hidden some intriguing information that describe the building's earliest appearance as the state's repository of legal tender.

Not surprisingly given its history, the archival record for the Old Treasury is much spottier than that for the State House itself. This report will focus primarily on the physical evidence, with references to the relevant historical documents where appropriate. Separately bound addenda for archaeological investigations by the Lost Towns Project/Anne Arundel County Trust for Preservation, Inc.; paint analysis by Richard Wolbers at Winterthur; and a brief report on the exterior masonry and grading project will be forthcoming shortly.

## **Introduction**

The shape of the Old Treasury is hard to understand given its known function. Its form is reminiscent of early churches and the vault beneath could not possibly have served a useful treasury function (and in fact was a liability that could allow intruders to work up through the floors below undetected). There is also a significant change in brickwork halfway up the building that is curious, suggesting different periods of construction, possibly more than a pause from one season to the next. This possibly dual early history bears more archival research at some point, if only for interest as an historical oddity. For the sake of this report, we are focused primarily on trying to understand how it may have looked during its early use as a public treasury, to determine what elements remain from that period, and to record significant alterations. At this time, the future use of the building is unknown, and so research included here is related to ensuring that the exterior masonry and grading work is done in a manner that stabilizes and protects the structure, while providing enough information to make decisions about ambulatory and ADA access to the building going forward.

## **How the building might have appeared in the 1730s**

The earliest configuration of the Old Treasury is not fixed with the current evidence. However, we do know the portico, whose walls were built after the main walls of the Treasury, is a very early addition, and could possibly be an alteration during construction. The earliest known roofline was a hipped roof, meaning the roof sloped down to meet each wall, creating a roof overhang around the entire perimeter of the building. The cornice in place today dates from this period. Within the first fifty years, the cornices were cut back on the street- and State House-facing ends of the building to create gabled ends. Thus the brick and mortar of the gables is different.

By the time of Peale's 1789 engraving, the Old Treasury has gabled ends. This change may have occurred in response to structural problems with the earlier hipped roof trusses and an internal arch. The Proceedings of the 1773 Assembly state that the building "is in such a ruinous state that they are for the present under the necessity of having it propped up as the walls are much cracked, which your committee apprehend is owing to the great weight of a Brick Arch that covers the said house." While there is no indication the smaller room had a vaulted ceiling prior to the last fifty years, the main room of the Old Treasury has long been vaulted. This may have occurred as early as the alteration from hipped to gable roof, since the 1773 document suggest an arched ceiling even within the tighter confines of a hipped roof.

There were originally five windows, two on the front of the building and matching ones on the rear. The central wing across from the front door also had an end window. Additional windows were added over time to the chimney ends of the rooms, in both cases set on the left side of the chimney (as viewed from the inside.) All of the windows have been altered, probably early in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, with the addition of a heavy frame set on the outside of the original frames. (Happily the original frames were left in place.)

The original windows were set back from the façade, with all of the woodwork being recessed four inches from the brick face of the building. [This recessed detail became part of London building codes in 1709 in response to the losses of the city's Great Fire, however this detail is not common in Colonial America.] The original jambs remain on the two front windows. With our investigation, the later jamb has been removed from the window left of the front door to uncover three sets of shutter hardware and an early paint sequence beneath the nineteenth century frame. The interior shutter on this window is an early element, but it has been cut down to fit the interior groove. Its original size would have fit the original exterior shutter groove. In other words, the shutter now on the interior likely was originally an exterior shutter. With only a single groove on the interior of the original frame, the sashes would have been in the same plane, implying casement windows for the early configuration. This would be appropriate for the 1730's. The bars on the front windows are original, although infilled with later strips of wood. All exterior shutters in place today are 1949 vintage.

In addition to the front door, there was an opening next to the chimney in what is now the gabled end of the building facing the State House. It is not yet clear whether this opening started out as a door or window, but by mid-eighteenth century it was a doorway. This is further supported by the early door stoop with details typical of the period that was found outside. The middle portions of the north side of this jamb retain undisturbed original brickwork. There were also post locations found adjacent to this stoop that imply a covered doorway. By the time of the HABS drawings, the door had become a window. This window was wider than the door that preceded it, leading to the masonry being altered on the south or chimney-facing edge. The other window on this wall facing the State House was eliminated (bricked up) by the end of the nineteenth century.

The doors in place in 2008, both exterior and interior, are good eighteenth century doors. The wooden stock locks are late nineteenth century. The front door and the door to the vaulted wing out back are typical of eighteenth century exterior doors for secure facilities, having a vertical board exterior and a second layer of cross sheathing boards to create a strong door. The door that opened toward the State House would have been similar in style. It is even possible that the door now in place on the interior to the wing was originally in that location.

There was a nineteenth century shed addition in the northwest rear corner that was removed around the turn of the twentieth century. The only significant impact on the structure appears to be the transition of this opening from being a window (paralleling the front window that was removed for inspection) to a door opening out into the shed, and finally back to being a window.

With the re-grading of the site back to its landscape appearance of the second half of the eighteenth century, bringing the brick walls out of the dirt and stone foundations visible again, and with plans for an ADA door where the west gable window was once a door leading onto the stoop remnant toward the State House, the only anachronisms remaining would be the nineteenth-century window jambs and the front steps to the portico.

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**Acknowledgments:** This project would not have been possible without the determination and coordination of the directors and their staffs from the Maryland Department of General Services, Alvin Collins, Secretary; Maryland State Archives, Dr. Edward Papenfuss, State Archivist; The Maryland Historical Trust, J. Rodney Little, Director and State Historic Preservation Officer; and to the State House Trust, Governor Martin O'Malley, Chair, and Senate President Mike Miller, Jr. and House Speaker Michael Busch, Ex-Officio.

We are particularly indebted to Thomas Genetti, Assistant Secretary, and Douglas Dawson, Project Manager from the Maryland Department of General Services – Office of Facilities Planning, Design and Construction, for their vision and coordination. Nor would it have been possible to compile this documentary evidence without the help of Maryland State Archives staff, particularly Tim Baker, Deputy State Archivist; and Elaine Bachman, Director, Sasha Lourie, Curator, and Mimi Calver, (retired), Artistic Property and Public Outreach. And for their oversight and care of this historic property now and with a view to the future, we are indebted to Michael Day, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Office of Preservation Services, and Orlando Ridout V, Chief, and Marcia Miller and Thomas Reinhart, Administrators, Office of Research, Survey and Registration, Maryland Historical Trust. And last but hardly least, we thank the members of the Maryland General Assembly who voted to fund this project.

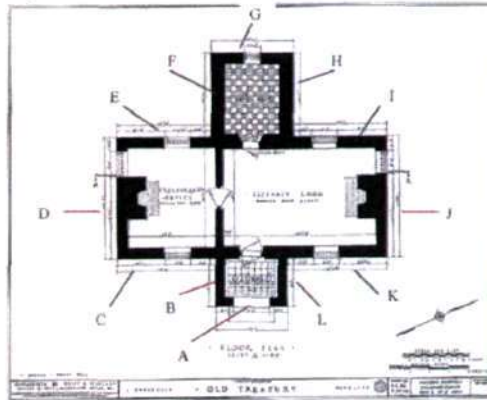


## Physical Evidence on Exterior Elevations

### Beginning at the vestibule and continuing clockwise

Color coding: green = end of season one building; blue = masonry alteration; pink = electrical

#### Floorplan with lettered elevations:



By the time of the HABS drawings in the 20th century, the function and interiors of the building had changed. This drawing is to be used only for locational purposes and elevation numbering.

#### Front Portico

The front portico is not toothed or built into the rest of the building's brickwork and thus was not part of the original construction. However it is clearly constructed with mid-eighteenth century mortar, suggesting it was an early addition. Originally the portico had a hipped roof along with the rest of the building.



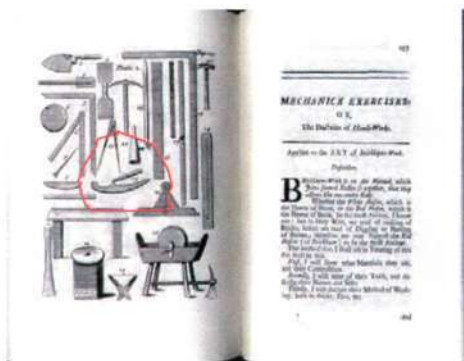
Green indicates earliest brickwork with area above having been added to create a gable.  
Blue indicates replacement bricks.

The sides of the portico (elevations B and L are undisturbed but for one brick on L against building).

With the Old Treasury having gone a thorough repointing in 1951, the front wall where hidden by the portico, was the only location that could provide information about the original pointing mortar and the appearance of the struck joint.



Similar to other early eighteenth-century mortars in Annapolis, this mortar is full of beach sand peppered with fragments of slate-gray mussel shell and bright white blebs of frozen lime. The blade width of the tool used to create the center-struck ruled line in the joint is wider than normal at 3/16". An eighteenth-century ruled joint is created with the use of a straight edge, unlike the modern grapevine joints seen around the cutout where the tool rides along the edges of the brick, increasing the apparent irregularity of the brickwork. In contrast, ruled joints created by rolling a Moxon-type jointer across a long straightedge produce a sense of uniformity in spite of irregular handmade bricks.



Joseph Moxon's 1678 *Mechanic Exercises* depicts a period jointer, shown here being rolled along a straightedge to create apparent uniformity.



## The Front Wall

The front walls indicate an initial period of construction with a hiatus at mid-window. The second phase of construction incorporates a change in both brick and mortar. This second phase may be from the next season or years later. The construction material of the portico resembles this upper construction phase, suggesting the portico was an alteration during completion of the building.

### Front Wall, Left of Portico, Elevation C:

The rise in grade has caused moisture to rise to a very high point on this wall (black line delineating “tide line” denoting the congregation of salts. Some rebuilding took place underneath the window.

This is an original window and retains much of the original jamb, bars, and early shutters. The shutters on the interior were originally on the exterior.



Original window frames and bars with later double-hung (dual plane) sash replacing earlier casement (single sash swinging in)



Original heavily-weathered sill with bars remaining



Brick arch supported by bricks cut to fit above wooden window



Original jambs are were built into original masonry with a crisp masonry return of 4" before wood  
Several generations of pintels have been mounted to the jamb and several paint schemes indicate different sash stops.

**Front Wall, Right of Portico, Elevation K:**

The base of this wall has been rebuilt in the twentieth century to the water table. The first phase of construction is still intact above to the middle of the window. The window appears to have an original frame hiding within nineteenth and twentieth century additions and alterations. The bars are original and the interior shutters are early though apparently made for the exterior.



Digging through fill dirt to find sterile soil, the stone apron has been removed and a clear demarcation within the stone foundations is visible where smooth-faced above-grade stones transition to more coarse below-grade stones .



The stone apron was most complete in this front corner against the side of the porch.  
Pattern viewed from above





### Gable End Wall Facing State House, Elevation D:

The 1949 Hopkins/Fowler report cites a photograph of the West elevation with the presence of a door in the space currently occupied by a window. (*Accession: MSA SC 293 p.8*). Evidence of alteration to the arch and masonry on the right-hand side indicate the opening was widened to accommodate this large window. In addition, archaeologists recently discovered a stone stoop overlaid by an eighteenth century brick stoop below what is now a window. The grade around the building rose considerably with construction of an artificially elevated State House oval built to enhance the apparent influence of government and its hierarchy over the Church. This 1770s soil importation began a cycle that eventually led to the grade extending well up onto the brick walls, causing water damage from at least the beginning of the twentieth century. Masonry changes included closing in the right-hand window on the left side of the structure and changes to right of the current window. The evaporation/salt tide line on this face of the structure is just above the window arch (*meandering black line*).



Brick door stoop being uncovered by archaeologists  
Note the iron crimp for holding a timber in place and part of stone apron.



At right side of stoop, a post hole indicates doorway was covered.

The early brick stoop was a pyramid of steps with a wooden timber outlining each level and filled with bricks. There are nice hand-wrought straps set in the wall that attached to the timbers to hold them in place. The top step is missing. The floor height inside is one step above that.

## Rear Elevation

### Back Wall of Small Room, Elevation E:

This portion of the wall had a 19<sup>th</sup> century shed added onto the structure, which prompted the modification of the window into a door. This window has been restored to the second quarter of the nineteenth century with eighteenth century-type shutters. The evaporation/salt tide line meanders across the upper half of the window frame.



When the interior portland cement plaster and tar were removed from the building in early winter, this and the D elevation here on the NW corner took three months to dry to a point the bricks did not remain blood red and cool/damp to the touch. (See masonry treatment report.)

During recent re-grading of the site to lower the grade, bricks were uncovered in a line coming out perpendicular from elevation D to a point almost perpendicular with elevation G (gable end of wing), suggesting the shed at one time enclosed this area in an almost square box.



Later bricks uncovered  
in line with Elevation D  
suggest a large shed



Additionally, a congregation of early nails (orange) in elevation F angled down from beneath the eaves on this elevation, suggesting the pitch of a shed roof.

### Northwest Side Wall of Wing, Elevation F:

This wall clearly shows the two phases of construction. A large number of bricks have been replaced on this wall before 2007, but no clear pattern of alteration is apparent. Could these be related to attachment points for shelving or other uses inside the shed?





**Gable End of Wing, Elevation G:**

The arch above the window has been reconstructed, and has a crack leading up from it towards the roof. The cornice has been removed with the addition of the vaulted ceiling. The discoloration to the bottom of the building indicates the later grade line.

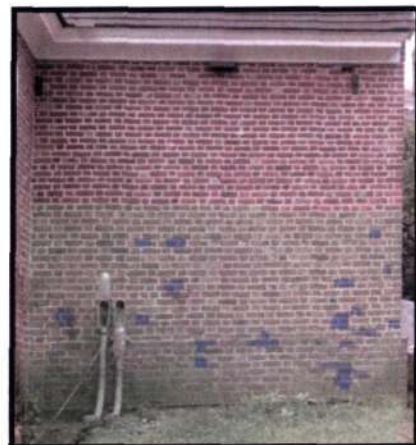


Cornice cuts occurring with change from hipped to gable roofline:



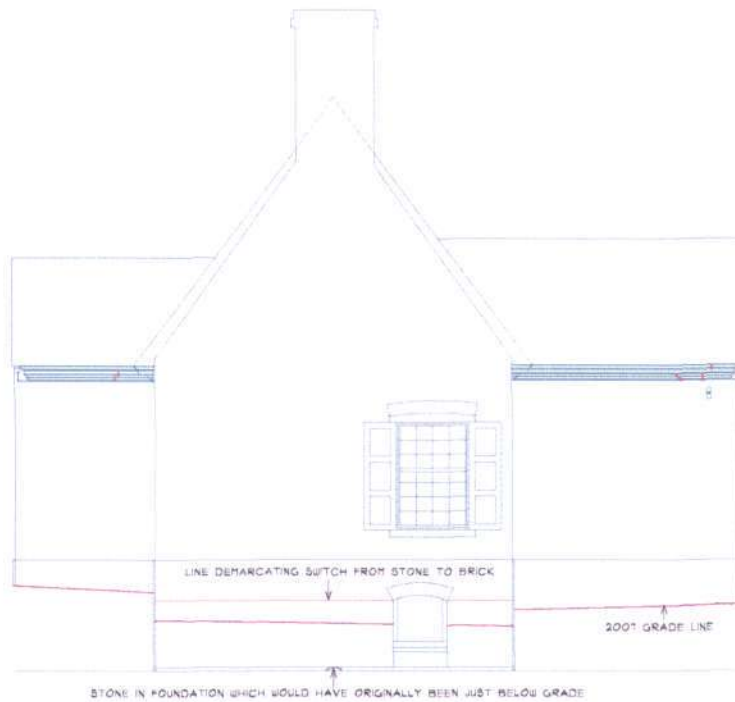
**Northeast Return Wall of Wing, Elevation H:**

This wall shows the two phases of construction clearly.





**Cornice cuts occurring with change from hipped to gable roof:**

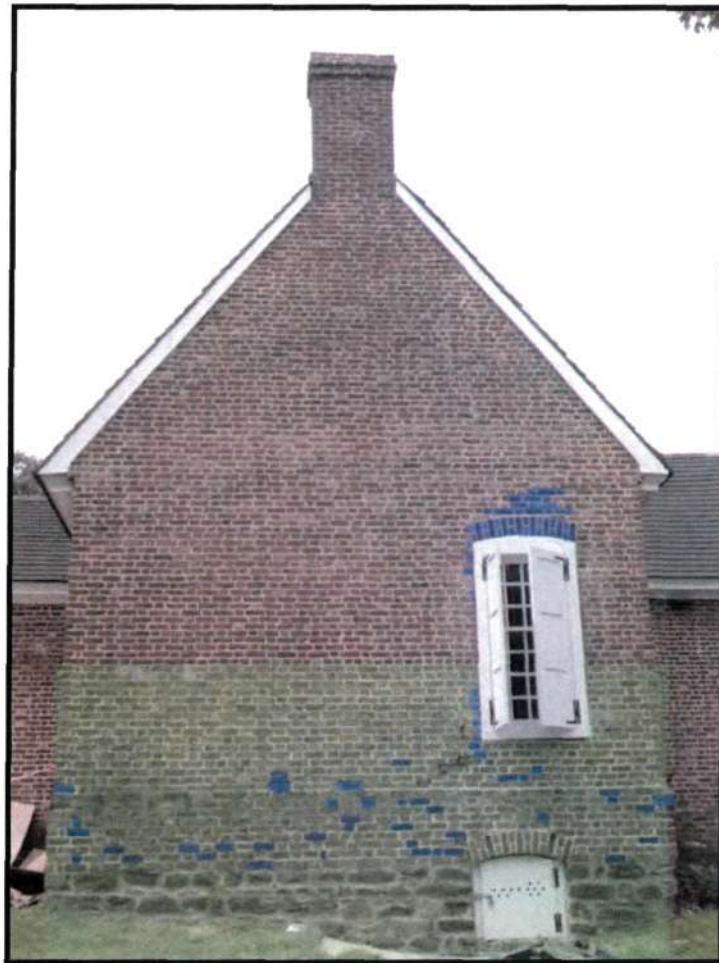


**Back Wall of Large Room, Elevation I:**



Repairs have been made to the bottom of the window. Ghost marks of the shutters show clearly around the window. This wall shows the two phases of construction clearly. Note the absence of a tide line on this elevation, since the stone foundations remained above grade.

**Street-facing Gabled End Wall of Large Room, Elevation J:**



The cornice has been removed, and the ceiling vaulted. The window was cut in later, thus the arch and jambs are rebuilds. The door to the vault below has been shortened to half its original height.



Vault entrance reduced due to grade rise.

Is brick build-out beyond face of wall (below pipe, left) related to an earlier attempt to reduce break-in possibility via digging under wall? [Vault door at earlier height extended to near base of foundation.]



Interior of Vault Facing State Circle

### **A history of break-in attempts at the Old Treasury:**

24 March 1747 - [Article from the \*Maryland Gazette\*](#). Reports on an attempted break-in to the Paper Currency Office on March 2, 1747. Also quotes Proceedings of the Council, Vol. XXVIII on the same event. (MSA SC 5224-B4-F10)

26 August 1762 - [Article from the \*Maryland Gazette\*](#) reporting an attempted break-in to the Paper Currency Office. (MSA SC 5224-B4-F10)

8 October 1784 - [Payments to various individuals for actions relating to the apprehension of two individuals suspected of robbing the Treasury Building](#). Auditor General (Journal) MSA S 150-5, Peter Force Collection B-2, MSA SC 4391, page 478

31 March 1791 - [Letter from Thomas Harwood to the Governor and Council describing recent attempt made on the treasury by way of breaking a hole in the brick wall of the repository. The attempt was rendered unsuccessful by the ceiling of the plank on the inside](#). The letter also lists repairs necessary to insure against additional attempts. (MARYLAND STATE PAPERS (Series A) MSA S 1004-72-40.)

1783 [Description of the building by Johann David Schoepf, a visitor to Annapolis:](#)

"Next the State House is a little building of one storey meant for the publick treasury. It is said to be a very strong and fast building, doors and windows I saw well-barred and fixed but with all this the house is empty. The real Treasuries of this province, throughout the war, were the tobacco-warehouses; the taxes for the most part being assessed and paid in tobacco and other produce, because the people had no hard money and unfortunately have none still."

*Travels in the Confederation*, Translated and edited by Alfred J. Morrison  
Philadelphia, 1911, p. 365. MSA SC 2745



## Physical Evidence on Interior Elevations

### The Main (or “Large”) Room

Clockwise from front door to corner:

On the interior, the large room that one enters into from the front door had a flat ceiling during the hipped roof period. The addition of the vaulted ceiling (an eighteenth century alteration) necessitated the change to a gabled roof. This change also led to the chimneybreast above what had been the flat ceiling to be filled out square with the jambs below, thus providing an appearance similar to the current arrangement.

One wonders at the success of this alteration, given a November 27, 1765 document: “Your Committee further Report that the House wherein the Commissioners for Emitting Bills of Credit keep their Office is in such a ruinous State that they are for the present under the necessity of having it propped up as the Walls are much cracked, which your Committee apprehend is owing to the great Weight of a Brick Arch that Covers the said House.” *Committee Report on the state of the building, Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, November 16 - December 23, 1773 Session, page 55.*

The pattern of nailing blocks implies a high wainscot paneling for this main room. The same construction phases visible on the exterior are also visible on the interior brickwork.



Chair rail

Example of mid-eighteenth century high wainscot with panels continuing above the chair rail. From an unknown building; stored at Menokin in Warsaw, VA.

### Front Wall Evidence:

The front door is likely to be original. Note angled battens on the interior face in contrast to vertical boards on exterior, creating a strong security door. Unfortunately the frame was replaced in 1949.



Some rebuilding has occurred at the top of the door for a modern lintel (blue).

There is a distinct line between construction seasons (seen here highlighted with green along lower half).



Wood blocks for attaching high wainscot (*above*) have since been replaced with bricks (*mid-wall line of blue blocks*). Lines of smaller wood blocks (*yellow*) set into joints were used to attach molding.

## Main Room, continuing counter-clockwise from front door

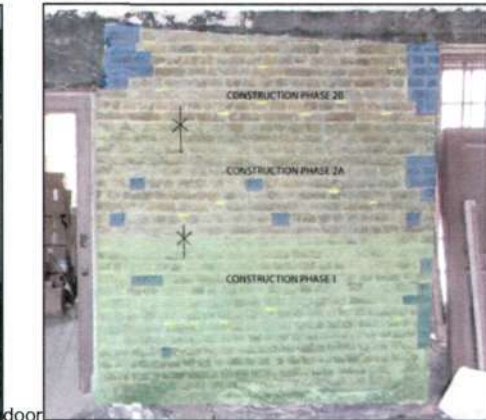


### Facing State House.

This wall has been altered for electrical wiring (pink). More brick infill of nailer block locations.

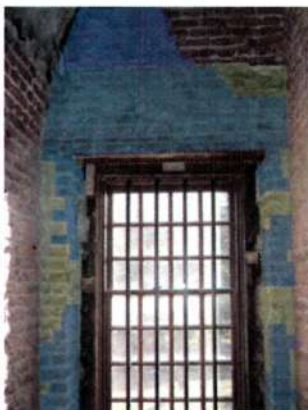


## Looking toward Back Wing:



This wall curiously shows three distinct early phases of construction where the others just show two. Rebuilding has occurred in patches through the length of the wall and along the left side of the door.

## Chimney Wall:



The window was cut in later.

The chimneybreast was modified for a vaulted ceiling. The arch to the bressmer timber has been rebuilt with shell mortar probably in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



## **Small Room**

In the smaller room, the vaulting of the ceiling is much more recent than in the large room and probably dates to the twentieth century. The chimneybreast has not been squared up above the line where the ceiling had been flat and thus has an awkward naked appearance.

This room may have had a wainscot, however, it would not have been imposing as in the main room.

### **Wall Adjoining Large Room**



The wall above the flat ceiling line is constructed with materials that match the vaulting in the large room.

Although HABS devoted two pages of drawings to the lock on this door, the lock is a stock nineteenth century model. The door is eighteenth century.



### **Front Wall**



This interior shutter may once have been on the exterior, having had the bottom rail cut down, possibly to fit inside.

The security window bars are hand-wrought originals.

The other windows in this room have been outfitted to look like this window using modern materials.

The line of brick infill (blue) again suggests high wainscot, although it would be less ornate in this small room.





**Small Room continued:  
Chimney Wall**



A window to the left of the chimney has been infilled and the arch of the chimney has been reworked.

The window on the right hand of this wall used to be a doorway. The masonry next to the chimney shows evidence of the opening being enlarged for this purpose, causing an asymmetrical opening.



**Back Wall, Northwest corner of building**



The opening on the back wall of the small room has cycled from being a window paralleling the window on the front wall to a door out into an early nineteenth century shed room, and finally back to a window. The current frame is twentieth century with recycled nineteenth century material used for blocking.

**Archival Record:**

1 May 1804 - Proposal for repairing the Treasury from Ezekiel Jacobs: "For cleaning the old roof and covering with shingles to be plained and squared to shew not exceeding seven inches length - the roof containing about 21 1/2 squares. \$162.50

For putting a floor in the South End room of the treasury and chair and washboards. \$65.00 For building a woodhouse of brick a nine inch wall the rise/ of it to enclose the upper square formed between the treasury room and the main building. \$190.00 (Total)

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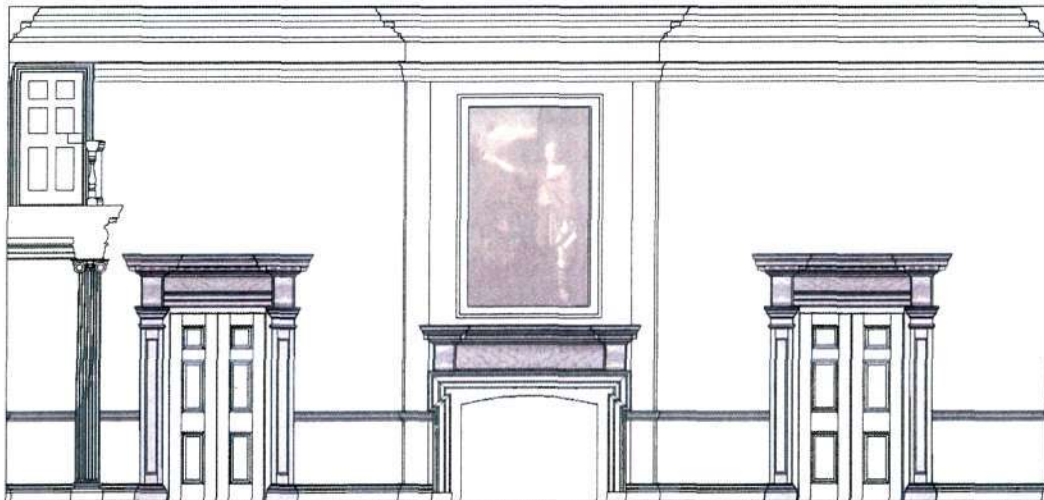
# **Old Senate Chamber and Old Treasury Investigations, 2008**

Interim Report on Archival and Architectural Evidence  
Old Senate Chamber at the Maryland State House

09/17/2008 (*updated on 11/24/2008*)



Window Wall  
RESTORED



Chimney Wall  
RESTORED

**Report by the John Greenwalt Lee Company**

Produced for Maryland Department of General Services, Alvin C. Collins, Secretary  
Contract Number BA-491-070-203

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Lead Investigator: Charles A. Phillips, AIA, AIC  
*with John Lee, Ellen Hagsten and Lisa Wilkerson*



## The Maryland State House in Historical Context

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The Declaration of Independence not only set off an armed conflict between the American colonies and the most powerful nation in the world, but also loosed an internal struggle for power between the colonies. Selection of the new seat of national government was a significant aspect of that wrangling and positioning. The primary contesters were New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, through their proxies New York City, Philadelphia, and Annapolis. After years of competition, George Washington chose to avoid the competing cities and states to carve an unaffiliated city out of Maryland and Virginia in the swamps at the falls of the Potomac.

At the time of the Declaration of Independence, Annapolis was a relatively young town compared to the major seaports and seats of commerce at New York and Philadelphia. In fact in 1776, Philadelphia was the second largest English-speaking city in the world, exceeded only by London. Annapolis, throwing its hat into this ring was staking out its future. Yet by this time Annapolis was rapidly becoming a cultural center and, as the state capitol, those with political aspirations began flocking to the area. Many of the great houses being constructed around the State House during the 1769-1776 time period (Paca, Brice, Ogle Hall, Chase-Lloyd) were the city homes of wealthy planters hoping to parlay their prosperity into political clout. Under construction since 1772, the Maryland State House (or Stadt House as it was known at the time) decried the growing wealth and importance of the planter and merchant classes of Annapolis. Early plans for the building by Joseph Horatio Anderson exemplified high-style Georgian windows, doors and mantles treatments for the primary rooms...and the plans were apparently exceeded in quality and grandeur in the final execution.

The stateliness of the finished State House was widely acclaimed and visiting Europeans frequently commented that Annapolis was very cosmopolitan for its size. The quality of the theatre and social scene of Annapolis was regularly commented on by notables such as Charles Willson Peale. In this way Annapolis might have been comparable to Bath, England where the latest styles were exhibited before they caught on in the more conservative London.

In 1781, French army chaplain Abbe Robin wrote "This opulence was particularly observable at Annapolis. That very inconsiderable town, standing at the mouth of the river Severn, where it falls into the bay, out of the few buildings it contains, has at least three-fourths such as may be stiled elegant and grand. The state-house is a very beautiful building, I think the most so of any I have seen in America. The peristyle is set off with pillars, and the edifice is topped with a dome."<sup>1</sup> In 1787, George Washington's friend, Englishman Samuel Vaughan, wrote of Annapolis in his diary: "The city contains about 450 houses, 2500 inhabitants, State House, Court House, Gaol, Church, Governor's House, poor house, playhouse, assembly room and the following gentlemen have superb houses that would not disgrace Westminster, Mr. Stone, Messrs. Wallace, Johnson, and Dr. Scott. Here, Mr. Mann keeps an excellent public house. Four rooms on a floor and one for company, 66 feet by 21 feet. The second story lodging rooms all wainscoted to the ceiling might vie with any tavern in England."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> September 21, 1781 Abbe Robin "New Travels in America" Transcription by Philip Freneau (Philadelphia, 1783). MSA SC 5287-1-186

<sup>2</sup> Quote of Samuel Vaughan on page 22 of "Annapolis Houses, 1770-1775" by Deering Davis. Architectural Book Publishing Co Inc, 1947. [Original Vaughn diary at Library of Congress]

The committee that released Builder Charles Wallace from his contract as the building was being occupied in 1779 commented: "The committee have examined the stadthouse throughout, and are of opinion, that many parts thereof are finished with more elegance than was required by the contract, particularly the front door, great hall, and court, the senate house and house of assembly, the president's and speaker's seats, and the galleries." Apparently the committee was impressed with the whole of the Senate Chamber, and especially the President's Seat (niche and dais) and the Gallery. With these sorts of comments one might expect the room to have been one of the finest Georgian rooms in America.

That was not our impression walking into the room in 2007.

### **No longer high-style Georgian in 2007**

By 2007, the niche within the engaged columns and pediment of the President's Seat was still attention-grabbing, but nothing else in the room quite made it to that level. The doors, windows, and mantle were particularly lacking. The research that we have accomplished since then has revealed the usual slow progression of alterations common to any historic space, with the first significant work being done in 1792 and 1798, including changes largely associated with the lower level of the gallery and the replacement of the ceiling and cornice. While changes continued, the room was on the whole still recognizable until 1877-8 when the State House, including the Old Senate Chamber, was gutted so that only the internal portions of the niche survived. The resulting room was dressed in High Victorian, Renaissance Revival and remained that way until 1905 when a "Restoration" was undertaken. That Restoration was based largely on two circa 1868 stereoviews, one of the President's Seat and the other of the Gallery starting with the left-hand column and stopping halfway between the third and fourth columns, thus not including details at either end. Neither stereoview shows typical door or window dressings.

During the restoration, elements not shown in these two photographs were based on the limited 1905 understanding of "Colonial Design." By today's standards, very little physical investigation was conducted and despite the claims of the restoration committee's chair, J. Appleton Wilson, that objects in the photographs were copied in minute detail, there are few items that bear even a close resemblance under scrutiny. Even the proportional spacing of the gallery columns was off by more than two feet across the front, and the engaged columns with pediment over the niche were buried too far into the wall. The result was a considerable lessening of the prominence of the entire seat. The dais was too small and, having received a third level that never existed historically, the top was too small to be functional. There was a re-Restoration in 1940 primarily associated with removing misproportioned overdoors, removing the shelf and frieze of the mantle (presumably to provide more room for the Washington, Lafayette, and Tilghman Painting) and installing an antique floor from another building.

Thus in 2007 the niche was the only original material *and* the only accurate representation in a room with failing twentieth-century plaster. The need to remove the compromised plaster and finishes on the walls presented our team with an opportunity to physically investigate the room – ground truthing the documentary materials – and develop a more accurate conception of the room when George Washington resigned his commission in December 1783 and a few weeks later in 1784 when the Treaty of Paris was ratified.

Unfortunately the demolition work in 1877 was thorough and the 1905 plaster friable enough to have muddied the surface. Despite these obstacles, a great deal has been gleaned. The documentary records also provide an interesting perspective on the space. Information previously gathered by the Maryland State Archives onto [mdstatehouse.net](http://mdstatehouse.net) provided a good starting point, but certainly must not be considered an end. The investigation – both physical and documentary – has reached an interim plateau. The revised appearance that has begun to emerge should help to focus future research efforts.

## Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the determination and coordination of the directors and their staffs from the Maryland Department of General Services, Alvin Collins, Secretary; Maryland State Archives, Dr. Edward Papenfuss, State Archivist; The Maryland Historical Trust, J. Rodney Little, Director and State Historic Preservation Officer; and to the State House Trust, Governor Martin O'Malley, Chair; and Senate President Mike Miller, Jr. and House Speaker Michael Busch, Ex-Officio.

We are particularly indebted to Thomas Genetti, Assistant Secretary, and Douglas Dawson, Project Manager from the Maryland Department of General Services – Office of Facilities Planning, Design and Construction, for their vision and coordination. Nor would it have been possible to compile this documentary evidence without the help of Maryland State Archives staff, particularly Tim Baker, Deputy State Archivist; Elaine Bachmann, Curator; Mimi Calver, (retired); and Sasha Lourie, Curator, Artistic Property and Public Outreach. And for their oversight and care of this historic property now and with a view to the future, we are indebted to Michael Day, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Office of Preservation Services; and Orlando Ridout V, Chief; and Marcia Miller and Thomas Reinhart, Administrators, Office of Research, Survey and Registration, Maryland Historical Trust. And last but hardly least, we thank the Maryland General Assembly for voting the funds necessary for this project.



## Report Organization

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The creation of this document involved gathering, organizing, and interpreting the documentary and physical evidence associated with the Old Senate Chamber, while focusing on 1783 when George Washington resigned his commission, in the process immortalizing the space.

This report starts by presenting the individual clues to the puzzle that have been uncovered, organized feature by feature, working down from ceiling to floor. Within each feature the clues are largely organized chronologically, but the timeline has occasionally been interrupted where for reasons of clarity and inter-connectivity it was important to highlight a particular relationship. A summary follows the evidence for each and the evidentiary section is synthesized into a summary ties the features together to present a picture of the room as a whole.

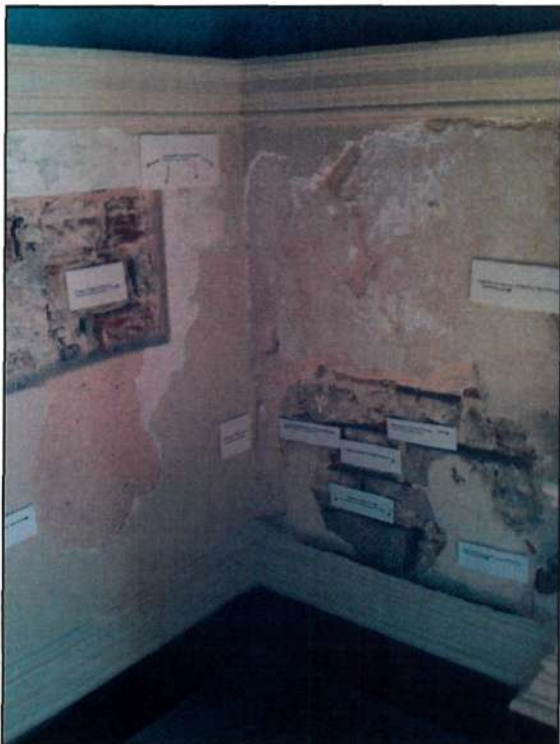
The summaries are followed by several sets of drawings depicting the room before investigation, annotating the location of physical evidence, and providing an initial interpretation of the evidence as it might relate to the original appearance of the room. These drawings are then followed by two more sets that show the physical evidence overlaid on elevations of the room in 2007 [e.g. 1905 restoration with some updates] and on the Georgian design that the evidence seems to be indicating for 1783, in the process confirming the relationship of physical and archival evidence.

There is more documentary and physical research to be done in order to refine the restored drawings and the final section (“Serendipity”) reiterates this case through descriptions of how some documentary evidence that has surfaced after the restored views were drawn has reaffirmed our conclusions.

## How this Project and Report Developed

In November 2006, we were asked to look at the Old Senate Chamber to provide a second opinion on how water was getting into the room. There were many areas of peeling paint and salt erupting through the plaster with the area behind the speaker's desk in the Northeast corner showing the heaviest deterioration. Previous studies had suggested various alternate sources of the water, but within ten minutes we pinpointed condensation. Combined with incompatible modern paint coatings on the surface, water condensing on the cooler surfaces of the walls in the Old Senate Chamber was causing the deterioration of the plaster and finishes. Beneath the surface the wall was dry.

At the time, it was believed that no traces of earlier plaster or evidence of the room's earlier appearance remained beneath the restored 1905 plaster, so we were asked to remove the failing plaster behind the speaker's desk at the corner and re-plaster it before the legislature returned in January. As soon as we began removing plaster, we realized that there were remnants of earlier painted plaster remaining on the wall and in the joints of the brickwork. We instead decided to label the partially dissected area to provide an educational exhibit explaining that through selective demolition and analysis we might learn a great deal more about how the room had appeared in 1783. We then built a foamcore panel to mimic the plaster below the chair rail so that the area could be covered for the cameras if needed. From the interest this reveal through the plaster inspired, the larger project to investigate the earlier appearance of the room developed to include both a review of the archival materials on [mdstatehouse.net](http://mdstatehouse.net) and to search for clues remaining on the walls through selective demolition and analysis, something akin to above-ground archaeology.



← The initial reveal in the NE corner behind the president's desk with labels.



Interim posterboards to educate the public about what evidence was being uncovered.

# **Investigating Historic Buildings**

*By Charles A. Phillips*

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## **Background**

It has been said that the work Paul Buchanan and I did at Gunston Hall in Mason Neck, Va. in the 1980s reinvented historic building investigation. By that time, Paul had retired after 31 years at Colonial Williamsburg, ending up as Director of Architectural Research. By contrast, I was a young firebrand having just finished 3-1/2 years as the Director of Restoration at Old Salem.

Williamsburg and Old Salem had different cultures and so had evolved divergent ways of doing things in the decades since the Boston architectural firm of Perry, Shaw and Hepburn had done the initial work recording and restoring the first buildings at Williamsburg in the 1930's and Salem in the 1950's. Paul had a professional degree in architecture from the University of Virginia, but had worked as an architectural historian and never needed to have a license. I had degrees in history, architecture, and preservation from the University of Texas and became a licensed architect in 1983. Together we worked as a great team with enough mutual respect to blithely tear apart the other's hypotheses and hubris enough to attack our own when necessary.

## **From Historic Structures Report to Historic Structures File**

Colonial Williamsburg and the National Park Service had similar methods of developing Historic Structure Reports prior to undertaking significant work on any of their buildings. This involved lengthy gathering of historic data and a rigorous investigation and poking at the structure in question. Both produced heavy narrative tomes that sat on the shelf after creation and would literally require a week of searching to find all of the references to a particular window.

Frank Horton, the independent thinker who started the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts [MESDA] at Old Salem with \$1 million of his own R.J. Reynolds stock and his own decorative arts collection, had established a unique historic buildings filing system while Director of Restoration at Old Salem before me. The town of Salem was set up along European lines like a great estate with all of the land held by the Moravian Church. Lots were leased to community members and the town's early maps created a system of numbered building lots. Salem had the first building code in North Carolina back in the 1780's and all construction required permission. Horton had personally gone through the Moravian Archives extracting photographs and sentence-by-sentence breakdowns of the records up to mid-19th century.

In the days before word processors, this involved re-typing each line often several times if it referred to more than one building lot or more than one material, like nails, glass, etc. All of these snip-its resided in the lot files along with photographs and any current information that Frank came across. In the end, this meant it only took an hour to sit down with a file and put the loose information in chronological order to digest the history of a building, material, technique, or person in the community. This method of research and organization – constructed without a specific question in mind – is unusual and more akin to a brainstorming session.



Since the Maryland State House was briefly the national capitol, we must consider the likelihood that artifacts other than just the uniform Washington wore at his resignation might be stored at the Smithsonian or in other national archival collections. We might even find that Architect George Frederick's claim that he carefully drew the room in 1877 before it was gutted is indeed true and his files still exist for us to find.

In order to achieve a credible restoration, we must continue the search until all leads are exhausted. At the same time, we must recognize this room is a national, not just a local, treasure. A nationwide appeal this fall for any information or pictures citizens may have of this room would be an appropriate prelude to preparations for the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of George Washington's resignation of his military commission and the signing of the Treaty of Paris, formalizing our independence from England.

# ANNOTATED EVIDENCE

*After the General Overview, the following documentation – including annotations of archival documents and photographs of physical evidence uncovered during our investigation of the room – proceeds top down through the Old Senate Chamber (ceilings, cornice, lighting, walls, wainscot, doors, windows,.....). Accession numbers are those on mdstatehouse.net.*

*This document contains photographs that require authorization for reproduction for which permission has not been sought by these authors as this report was produced for internal consumption and education of the members of Maryland's State House Trust in preparation for repairs in the Old Senate Chamber.*

If a decision is made to distribute this document more widely, issues of authorization will need to be addressed by the Trust.

STATE HOUSE

"Travels through the United States of North America 1795, 96, 97 -

Duke de la Roche foucault Liancourt

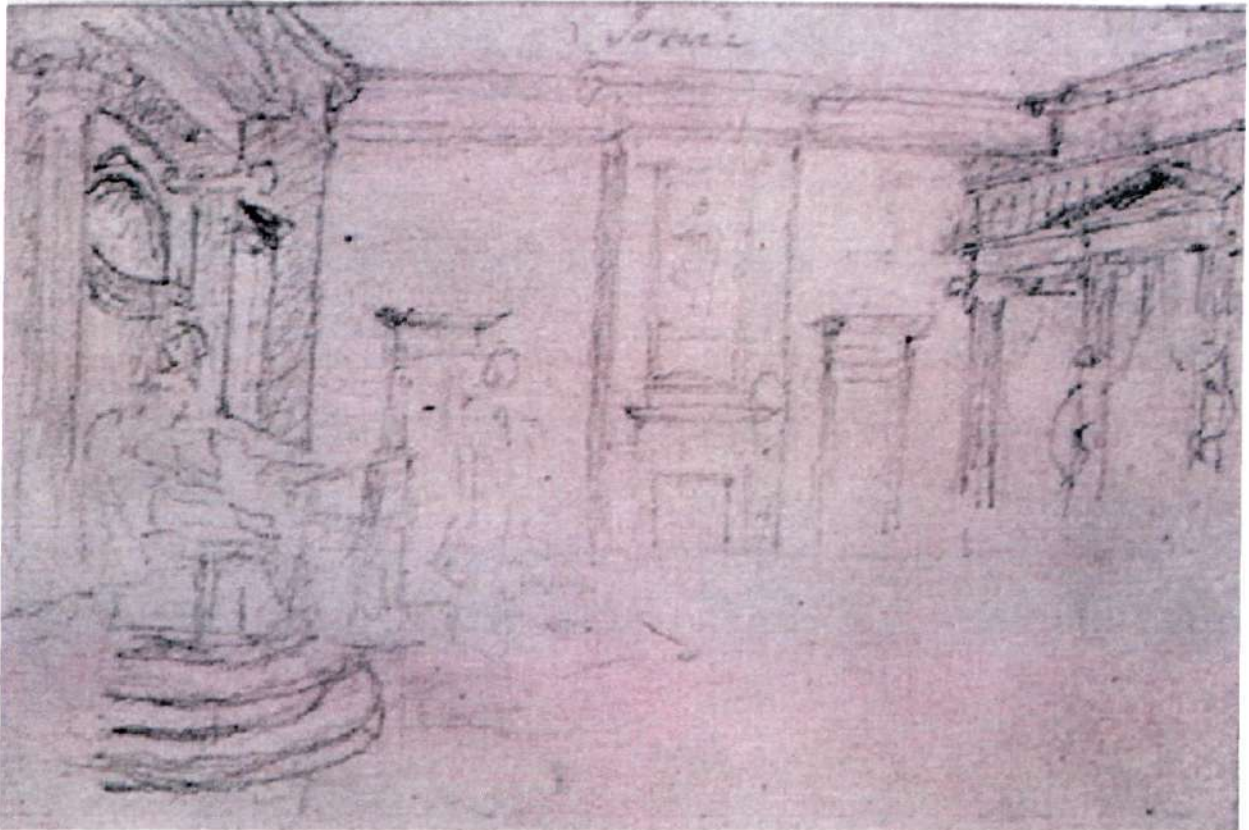
"The state-house is one of the largest public buildings in the United States, and its interior the most complete and finished, at least as far as the plan is at present executed. This structure, which has already cost one hundred and thirty thousand dollars, will probably require from fifteen to twenty thousand more before it is completed, which it will soon be, as the legislature grants every year the necessary sums for this purpose. It contains apartments of the executive council, and rooms for the principal officers of the state, except for the governor, who has a house built by the state. It has a large cupola with a lantern at the top, which is ascended by a commodious staircase, and from whence there is a prospect as far as the Atlantic, beyond the Chesapeake; of the peninsula of Delaware-bay; and of the little point of Jersey, which separates it from Annapolis."

Circa 1797 - Description of the present condition and cost of building the State House by Duke Francois-Alexandre-Frederic le Rochefoucault-Liancourt, in his Travels Through the United States of North America, The Country of the Iroquois and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797 by the Duke de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt, London: Printed for R. Phillips, 1799. Transcription by Shirley Baltz.

Accession: MSA SC 5224-B4-F11

**Annotation:** As a duke, Liancourt presumably was in a position to have seen elegance in the US and Europe. His use of "most complete and finished" is in reference to the design and quality of details and finishes and not to completeness of execution as indicated by the phrase that followed.





*Sketches of the Old Senate Chamber for painting of Washington Resigning* by John Trumbull. Helen A. Cooper, John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter, (Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 1982) pp. 88-90

Accession: MSA SC 5287-11-435

1822 John Trumbull sketch in preparation for paintings that were finally executed years later:

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**Annotation:** This view is a mirror image of the room. (We are not aware of Trumbull using a drawing aid to reverse the room and the inaccurate proportions suggest one was not used.) The reversed view was probably chosen to allow the painter to place people in their symbolic positions – George Washington in the center facing the artist with the most important figures to his right – and then bathe Washington in focal light that could not have come from behind him. Additionally, if the wall had been represented correctly with windows along this wall, the painting would have been complicated by natural light.

Trumbull appears to be emphasizing a few elements with dark shadow lines. He even does a detail of an entablature breakout at a column. In this overall sketch the left corner of the two doors, mantle, columns of the gallery, right corner of the window next to the dais all have darkened shadow lines and the doors and possibly the mantle have an extra line, possible to delineate the break.

The circa 1868 photos show us that the entablature of the gallery breaks at the four columns while the pediment over the president's niche does not.

made by Mr. W. M. Chase, 941 W. Franklin St. On writing to him he said he could find no negatives of the old Chamber but sent me a small photograph of the wall opposite the gallery which was he had discovered, in an old sample book. Of course this was exactly what we lacked, and gave us the columns, and entablature about the niche. I then wrote for a photo of Trumbull's picture in the rotunda of the Capitol at Washington, and Mr. Elliott Woods, the Architect in charge, sent me a very clear print. This picture was painted in 1814 and from it we were able to reproduce the hoods and consoles above the two small doors, one of which is false. The photographs had been taken about 1868 before any changes had been made in the room except that the chimney breast had been removed. As Mr. Frederick has stated that he had prepared careful drawings of the gallery so that it might easily be reproduced, I asked him that we might have the advantage of these. He replied, under date of June 16, 1905, that he had given up his office, and such papers as he had retained were packed away, and he was about to leave the City for some months and could not comply with my request.

The small photograph of the South wall also showed the main doorway and the enclosure below the gallery for spectators. This had small swing doors with panels of gathered silk, and on each side, a small bracketed seat for a door keeper. These were reproduced as accurately as a minute examination of the photograph admitted. In my constant search for authorities I found a copy of the *Columbian Magazine* published in Philadelphia, February, 1789, which contained a short notice of the State House, and more important still, a plan of the main floor. This plan showed the gallery columns on the floor, the location of fireplace and doors in West wall. These were merely confirmatory, but the "Throne" for the Speaker was all important and was shown as three risers above floor and of an oval shape, somewhat flatter than a half circle. This was carefully followed. It also gave the original staircases, one on either side of the building, from a landing of one of

March 19, 1927 - Restoration of the Old Senate Chamber by J. Appleton Wilson. From the Maryland Historical Magazine. MSA SC 1455

Accession: MSA SC 5287-7-105

**Annotation:** The circa 1868 stereoview of the niche – the earliest photographic representation – was provided by Photographer W.M. Chase of Baltimore.

port outlining what had been done and what other work was necessary. This report was appended to his message of that year." The above is quoted from a long article which appeared in the *Sun* of Dec. 28, 1903, by Mr. George A. Frederick, who was the Architect in charge of the work at the time, and who prepared the report. He continues: "All the plastering had been removed (from the Senate Chamber) and restored from drawings and models made from casts of the original ornamental parts. I much regretted in this room, being compelled to remove the gallery, which for want of time could not be replaced. It was in a ruinous and dangerous condition. Careful measurements were taken and accurate drawings prepared of every part, so that nothing will prevent its exact reproduction, if such should be determined upon. Not only was the gallery in a ruinous condition, but its removal at that time was an imperative necessity, as the room itself could not be repaired, and the gallery (as it existed) kept in position during the progress of the work. The Board of Public Works fully realized this, and held a special meeting to consider the course to pursue, and as I insistingly advised its reconstruction should be done in materials of more substantial character than those first employed, and as time was pressing to get the chamber ready for the meeting of the General Assembly, and moreover, as the Board of Public Works already had gone far beyond the appropriation made for the repairs, it concluded it was better to leave the renewal and replacement of this work to the decision of the then fast approaching session. With the close of the work at that time, my employment as Architect ceased."

He then says, "In the latter half of 1877, night and day I worked and labored for the State of Maryland in the completion of the repairs, harder than ever I did in my life. The Legislature, impotent to vent its resentment on the Board of Public Works, for having as it claimed, transcended its powers in exceeding the appropriation made, as also its defined objects, saw fit to punish me, the Board's agent, by withholding nearly

March 19, 1927 - Restoration of the Old Senate Chamber by J. Appleton Wilson. From the Maryland Historical Magazine. MSA SC 1455

Accession: MSA SC 5287-7-105

**Annotation:** It appears that all of the carved elements were made of plaster in the original construction. Mr. Frederic considered this of low quality and incapable of being repaired and reused. It should be noted that ten years earlier the Corps of Engineers recommended that Mount Vernon be re-created in marble due to the insubstantial nature of wood (perceptions of durability among architects of the era may therefore be suspect).





Just up Maryland Avenue from the State House is a building of the same period with most of its original materials remaining. The front door at Hammond Harwood strongly resembles the niche in the Old Senate Chamber with all the Georgian embellishments including a prominent, projecting pediment over full columns that does not break forward across the leaf frieze.

The console bracket at the window over Hammond Harwood's front door depicts a typical 1770s bracket with bold leafy embellishments down the face. This is the sort of feature that would likely have framed the frieze for the overdoor/overwindow and possibly the mantle of the Old Senate Chamber.





**Assembly Room, Bath, UK** (Constructed in 1771)

This public assembly room was built before the State House was begun; making it appear that large stone-colored assembly rooms with a gallery across the entry end were in vogue.



Niche paint reveal

The Senate Chamber being the upper house would have been the most elegant space other than possibly the governor's office and would have been comparably elegant to this room in Bath. Note the windows are no less developed than the gallery. The fragments of original wall plaster found in the Old Senate Chamber indicate the original decorative finish was a creamy yellow with a glaze stippled on top to create a warm stone appearance similar to that represented in the Bath Assembly Room. The Old Senate Chamber was later repainted to "spruce up" the room with a single coat of paint that attempted to match the dirtied multi-layer early finish.



The 1868 stereocards are the first photographic views and, since photos are relatively unbiased, we can trust what they show within the frame. The stereoviews show the 1792 alterations are in place on the gallery, but unfortunately the frame does not include the gallery ends and the central pediment is largely obscured by the very large 1858 gas chandelier and its globes, while the niche is pretty well shown where it is not also obscured by the chandelier. The niche wall also shows paintings covering the locations of windows.

In the 1830's several additional large paintings are ordered for the room and apparently with insufficient wall space windows are sacrificed. Does this also explain the three rather than four windows on Lossing's window wall? And if so, which window was obscured? Close examination of the windows when they are all uncovered may answer that question. Unfortunately these two 1868 views show no unaltered doors or windows.

While changes continued to be made, the original appearance of the room would have still been recognizable until 1877-8 when the State House, including the Old Senate Chamber, was gutted and only the internal portions of the niche survived. The resulting room was dressed in High Victorian, Renaissance Revival and remained that way until 1905 when a "restoration" was undertaken. That restoration was based largely on the two 1868 stereo views, one of the President's Throne and one of the Gallery. The gallery view is limited starting with the left hand column and stopping half way between the third and forth columns, thus not including either gallery end. Neither shows typical door or window dressings. The elements not shown in these photos were replaced based on the limited understanding of "Colonial Design" in 1905. By today's standards very little physical investigation was conducted and, despite the claims of copying the photos in minute detail, there are almost no details that actually match the photographs accurately. Even the proportional spacing of the columns on the gallery is off by more than two feet across the front, and the engaged columns carrying the pediment over the niche are buried too far into the wall, with the result of lessening the prominence of the entire seat. The dais is too small and by having a third level that never existed historically, the top is too small to be functional.

There was some limited re-Restoration in 1940, primarily associated with removing overdoors that were misproportioned, removing the shelf and frieze of the mantle (presumably to provide more room for the Washington, LaFayette, and Tilghman painting); and re-laying the floor with salvaged antique flooring from an unknown building.

Thus in 2007 the niche was the only original material exposed and the only accurate representation in a room with seriously failing 20<sup>th</sup> century plaster. This presented an opportunity to physically investigate the room by "ground truthing" the documentary materials and working toward a more accurate understanding of what the room was like in 1783 when George Washington resigned his commission and a few weeks later in 1784 when the Treaty of Paris was ratified. Unfortunately the demolition work in 1877 was very thorough and the 1905 plaster very muddy, combining to leave very little evidence, and then obscuring what was left. Despite these obstacles, a great deal has been gleaned. The documentary records also provide an interesting perspective on the space and the materials on [mdstatehouse.net](http://mdstatehouse.net) are a good starting point but certainly should not be considered an endpoint at this stage. The research – both physical and documentary – has reached an interim plateau, but more remains to be done.



**Following is a description of what has emerged from the investigations to date.**

### **Entry Door**

One entered the room from the Great Hall into the lower level of the gallery through a door which was dressed with flat paneled pilasters like on the niche of the President's Throne mirrored on the opposite wall and visible between the center two columns of the Gallery as there was no vestibule from the hall. The entire Senate Chamber glowed as if constructed of honey-colored limestone or possibly amber, for both walls and trim are painted in imitation of stone.

### **Gallery**

The underside of the gallery was recessed in a manner that allowed a small cornice to run around the perimeter of each recess between the structural front beam and the beams running between the columns and the back wall. The underside of the front beam was paneled; the others may have been as well. The columns rested on low plinths, but were not interrupted or connected by wainscot nor were there risers for seats. [The outer two column shafts are original but not properly located]. The fully carpeted floor of the room ran all the way to the back wall. The balustrade at the upper level was 3" lower allowing for a more rotund baluster typical of Georgian design.

### **Doors and Windows**

The doors and windows were adorned with trim approximately 14" wide and proportionally adjusted to the opening. The door and window trim was based on the pilasters at the niche with full entablatures above. The masonry opening for the door to the committee room was 4" wider than the false door, making it a full 4 feet wide. The paneled pilasters of the windows sat on plain pedestals which were simply forward-projecting sections of the plain dado [unpaneled or flush-boarded] wainscot. The recess of the window extended down to the floor allowing the wainscot to visually wrap in across the window. And at least at the end-of-construction certification, paneled shutters were in the jambs, but not yet been hung on hinges and thus were inoperable but probably tacked in place. This may have still been the condition in 1792.

### **Niche and Dais**

The President's Seat was similar to the 1905 recreation, but was bolder with the engaged columns just touching the wall rather than being 1/3 buried; the entablature did not break at the columns, instead running from column to column at full forward projection; and instead of having bay leaves or tobacco leaves, the pulvinated frieze had oak leaves to signify permanence. The dais was almost two feet wider at the base and only two risers high providing a top that is well over 2' wider than the 1905 and a broad, almost 2'-wide first step that provided an ample platform for speakers.

The paint reveal down to the original stone finish of the niche also uncovered evidence of an overlying three-dimensional decoration which has yet to be deciphered, but appears to include a line of leaves standing up on the necking below the semi-dome and a series of original nails run horizontally at mid-dome, presumably holding something more substantial.

1825

Accession: MSA SC 5287-2-144

7 May - "Ordered that the walls of the Senate, House of Delegates and Executive Chamber and Committee rooms be yellow washed, the ceilings and stucco cornice be cleaned, the woodwork painted, that suitable carpet be put down in the said chambers and the desks repaired under the direction of the Governor."

23 July - Andrew Slicer paid \$119.50 for making carpet, repairing and varnishing desks and chairs and painting in the Senate Chamber."

GOVERNOR AND COUNCIL (Proceedings) 1825-1830. MSA S 1071-36.

1826

Accession: MSA SC 5287-3-132

"21 April - Washington G. Tuck ordered to cause the ceiling of the Senate Chamber and the House of Delegates room to be carefully examined and if it is found necessary to have the same repaired and put in a safe condition - also that Jeremiah Boyd cause such repairs to be made to the top of the Dome of the State House as may be found absolutely necessary for its preservation, as provided for by Resolution of the General Assembly.

25 October - Washington G. Tuck paid \$269.52 for repairs of the ceiling of the Senate Chamber and the House of Delegates under a Resolution of the last General Assembly.

27 December - Excerpt of message from Governor Joseph Kent to the General Assembly:

As required by the resolution No. 93, we caused the ceiling of the Senate Chamber and of the House of Delegates, to be carefully examined, and being found very much injured and unsafe, we had the old plastering entirely removed, the work done anew, and the chambers put in complete order.

We also employed Mr. Jeremiah L. Boyd to make such repairs to the dome of the State House as might be found necessary than was anticipated, that it is not yet completed."

GOVERNOR AND COUNCIL (Proceedings) 1825-1830. MSA S 1071-36

### **Annotation:**

**In 1825 the ceilings must have been in good condition and simply needed cleaning. Interesting that they needed to be replaced a year later. Did the cleaning discover a weakness?**

## RESTORATION OF THE SENATE CHAMBER.

J. APPLETON WILSON.

*The Maryland Historical Magazine* for December, 1907, contains a paper prepared by Mr. DeCourcy W. Thom, on the restoration of the old Senate chamber at Annapolis. This gives the general facts connected with the work, but perhaps a brief account of the steps taken in securing accurate data for the work of restoration, to the end that each portion should be as nearly as possible a true copy of the original, might be of interest.

"In 1876 the Legislature had appropriated a sum of money for the excavation of a cellar and the installation of a heating plant, under the old State House. No cellar had been originally provided, and there was but little ventilation below the ground floor. When the work was begun, it was found necessary to underpin the outside walls, except the North wall, from three to five feet. Then it was discovered that the floor timbers were absolutely rotten where they rested in the walls, and otherwise in places. This led to an examination of the timbers of the roof, tower and second floor, where nearly similar conditions existed. The flooring consisted of three layers which had been simply nailed, one over the other, as the under floor had become worn. On the roof was found four or five successive layers of tin, one above another, the lowest, which was probably the original covering, was composed of small loose unsoldered pieces, laid with a lap as is usual with shingles or slate. The wood sheathing was nearly all badly decayed. The floor above the Senate Chamber had sagged some five or six inches in the centre, and was held up by huge chains encased in clumsy wooden boxings, the chains hung from the roof trusses, equally detrimental and dangerous. Before the meeting of the Legislature of 1878, for whose accommodation the work was rushed night and day, Gov. Carroll requested a re-

1876 design and condition of  
(Old) Senate Chamber ceiling.

Restoration of the Old Senate Chamber, J. Appleton Wilson  
"Maryland Historical Magazine," March 19, 1927

Accession: MSA SC 5287-7-105

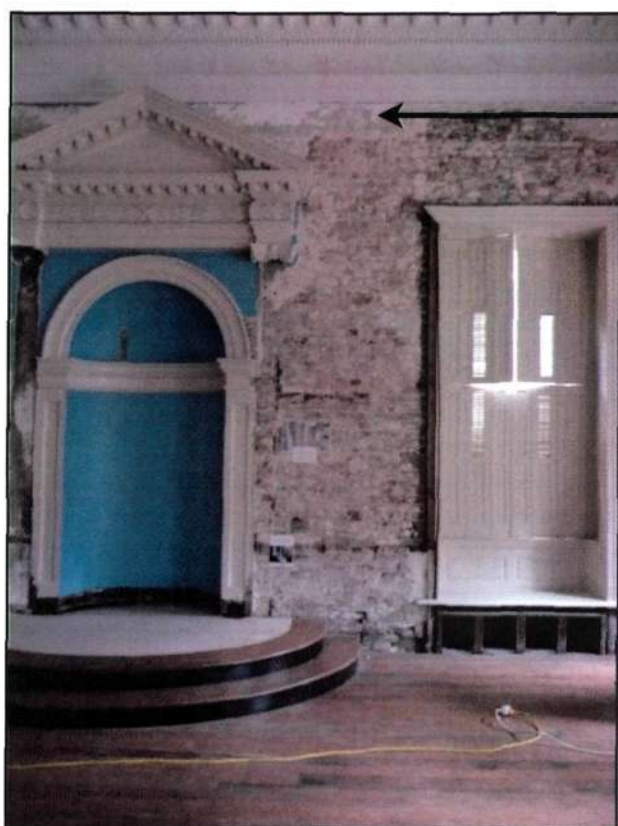




# CORNICE

## Chronology:

- 1798** Floor structure above and ceiling of Old Senate Chamber replaced. This would have necessitated replacement of the cornice.
- 1826** Cornice was likely replaced again.
- 1868** Stereocard cornice may show the 1826 cornice (which may or may not have replicated the 1798 cornice, but almost surely does not match the 1770s Georgian.)
- 1878** Claims of exact replication of cornice after ceiling was altered with large central beam creating coffered ceiling bays. Photographic comparison disagrees.
- 1905** Again cornice is claimed to replicate the 1878 cornice. Central beam removed and ceiling lowered 3" to accommodate newest structural system above. Again photographs disagree showing general repetition of the same elements, but details are different with each cornice replacement.

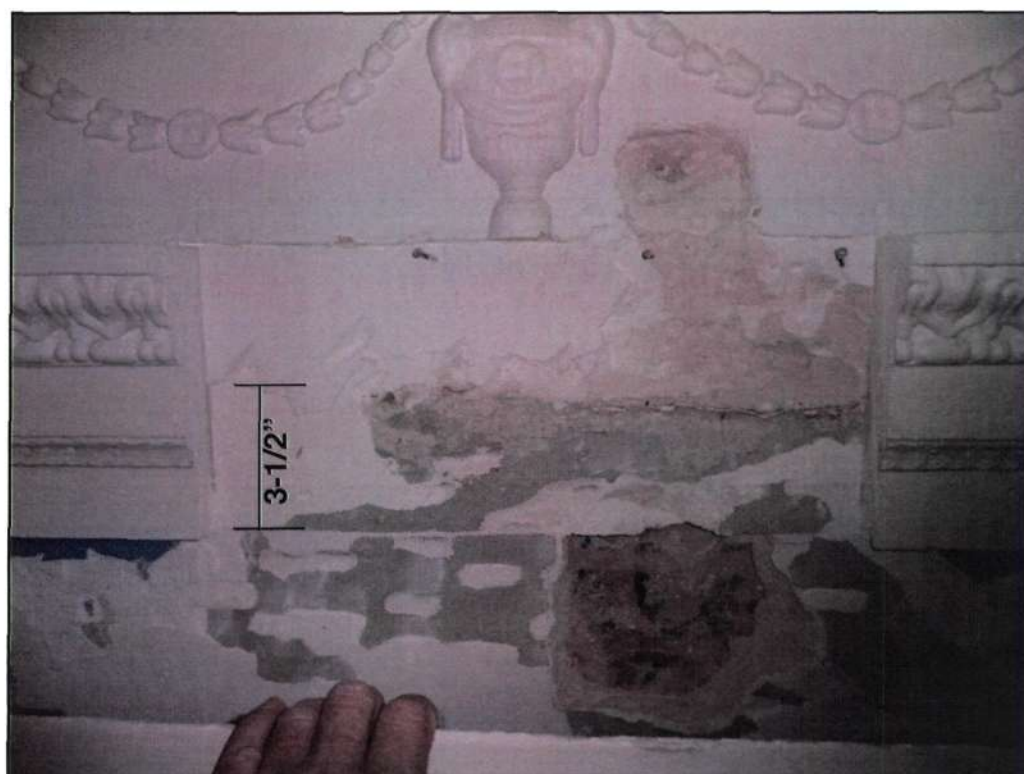


With 1905 blue wall plaster removed, note the 1878 wall plaster with intact finishes extends below and behind the 1905. The 1878 plaster is intact on the walls behind the current cornice and down about 3-1/2" onto the wall below.

According to J. Appleton Wilson, the ceiling was lowered by 3" in 1905. Why was an approximately two foot band of 1878 plaster retained around the room before re-plastering in 1905?

Photographs taken by the John Greenwalt Lee Company in 2008

1905 Cornice

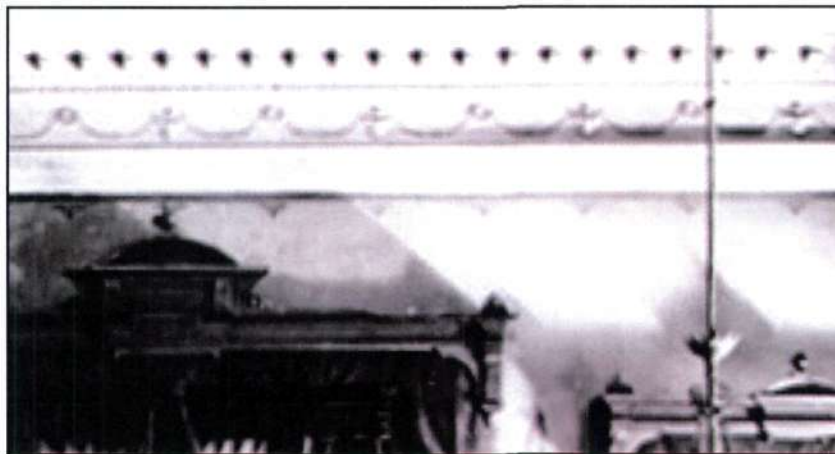


1878 Plaster

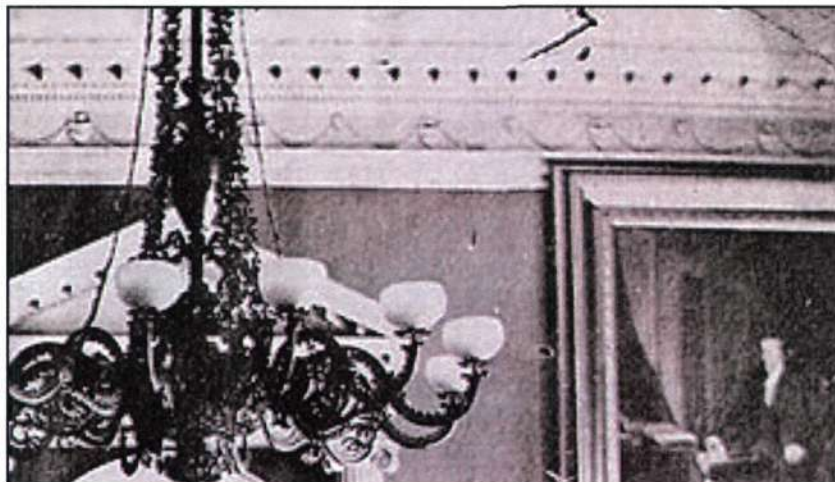




1905 rendition: Nothing is centered over the niche, but a rosette is nearest. Urns are sharply conical, sitting on a narrow base. Large rosettes hover higher than urn tops, leading to an asymmetrical drape of the swags. Swags do not touch bottom of band.



1878 cornice: An urn is centered over the niche, swags are considerably more flattened, nearly resting on the bottom of the band and rising higher on urn with a wider spacing between elements.



1868 view: Urns are much stouter and very rounded swags touch the bottom of band before rising to mid-point on urns.

**Annotation:** Details are not consistent from one era of cornice reconstruction to the next.

## Cornice Summary

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The cornice was likely replaced with every change of ceiling, although the 1826 ceiling change does not appear to have required significant structural work and thus the 1798 cornice may have been retained. Regardless, the cornice was replaced in 1798, 1878, 1905, and very possibly in 1826.

The architects in 1878 and 1905 pronounced that they had accurately matched the previous work with castings of decorative elements and drawings from the original. The photographic record disputes these claims. Each generation provided the same basic cornice elements: a classical cornice with a frieze made up of alternating rosettes and urns with a bellflower swag between. Photographs pre-1878, post-1878, and post-1905 show three different rosettes, three different urns, and three different drapes for the swag, each progressively less curved than the previous. Even the number of repeats is not consistent such that the central element over the niche pediment is alternately a rosette, then an urn, and finally a rosette.

Thus the current rendition is a 1905 reinterpretation of the 1878 cornice, which was a reinterpretation of the 1826/1798 reconstruction. Stylistically the swag frieze shown in those earliest photographs is early for 1779, but about right for 1798. By the 1790s, the details of Federal (or Adamesque) design had begun to replace the Georgian elements from the era of the room's construction. It is likely that in 1798 they would have been more interested in keeping up with the latest style than feeling bound by a sense of obligation to keep the room unchanged from the time of Washington's resignation.

This leaves us with little to indicate the details of the cornice in 1783 other than typical cornices from the period. The cornice of the pediment of the niche and gallery in the circa 1868 photographs provides the best direction.

Three local houses – Chase Lloyd, Hammond Harwood, and Brice House – share similar details to the evidence unearthed thus far in the Old Senate Chamber and all were built in the 1770s. Accurate documentation of appropriate cornices and other details should be taken from these houses before selecting a particular design to replace the 1905 cornice in the Old Senate Chamber. Shirley Plantation and Gunston Hall in Virginia also have strong design similarities to the evidence in the Old Senate Chamber.

# LIGHTING

## Chronology:

- 1783** Main source of lighting would have been daylight. Additionally candles at each Senator's desk and a single-tier chandelier.
- 1858** Gas lighting installed.
- 1868** Stereocards show large central chandelier and single-globe brackets on each column. Windows are covered.
- 1878** Testimony of R.C. Cornelius confirms installation of nine 3-light brackets with two arms in addition to four chandeliers for the newly coffered ceilings.
- 1886** Photo shows a pair of chandeliers centered in each bay of the coffered ceiling. Column lights have been replaced with two torchiers on the President's desk. Windows are covered in heavy drapery. No sign of the 3-light brackets called for in 1878.
- 1904** Postcard shows four 6-light chandeliers and two torchiers on President's desk. Windows are again uncovered.
- 1905** Interview of Mr. Brooks leads to return of a single chandelier with removal of coffered ceilings. Brooks states chandelier is to be "like the one in White's picture."
- Restoration however produces a two-tier chandelier in contrast to Edwin White's rendering of a Georgian-style single-tier with twelve candles. Daylight is again main source of lighting.



## COLONIAL INTERIORS, SECOND SERIES

PLATE 62



Masonic Lodge Room—Circa 1790

NEW BERN, N. C.

Colonial Interiors, Second Series, Tunis, Edith Sale, Bonanza Books, New York, 1930.

This Masonic Lodge in New Bern, NC is slightly later (circa 1790) and therefore the overdoor and overwindow is a bit more restrained and Federal in style than what would be expected for the Georgian-era Old Senate Chamber. It does however provide a good indication of the effect created by paneled pilasters with a capital that carry a console bracket to frame the frieze of the overdoor and overwindow.

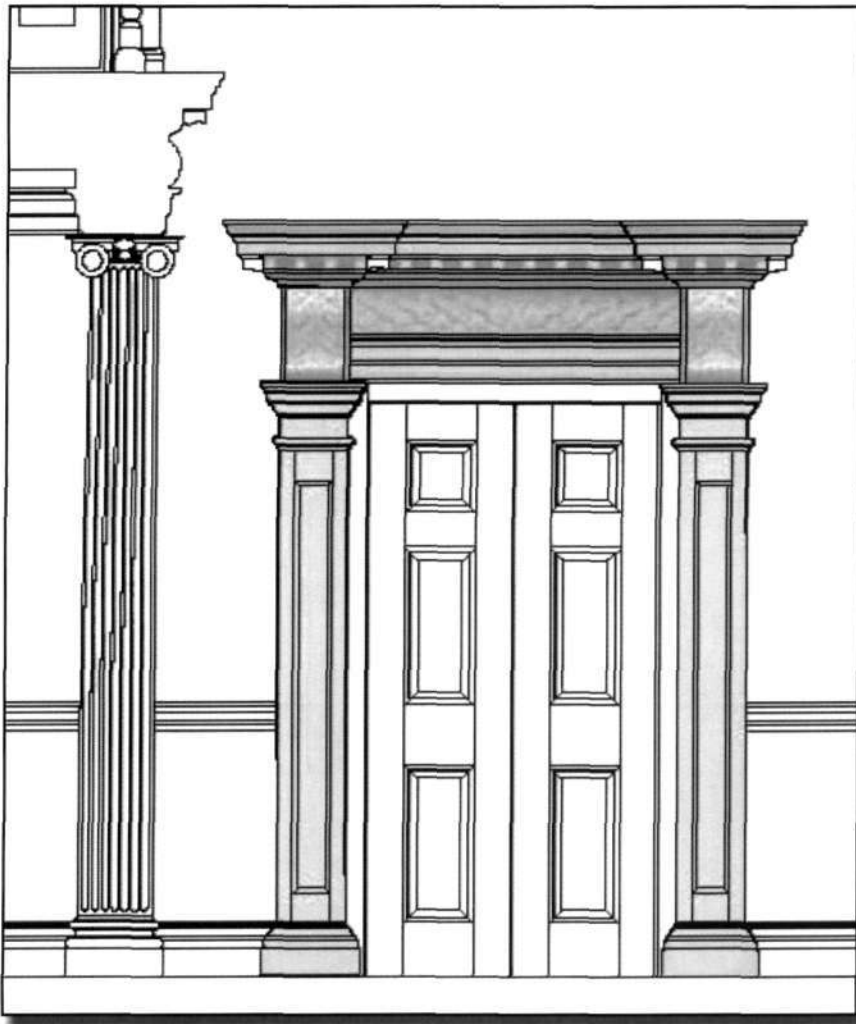
(In this case the top of the entablature breaks forward above the bracket and the frieze is flat, not pulvinated, as appears to have been the case in the Old Senate Chamber.)



**Historic American Building Survey (HABS Va-141) of a doorway at Gunston Hall, near Lorton, Virginia. This is an excellent example of a fully dressed Georgian doorway. (In this photograph, however, it is missing a number of applied carved decorations such as: the double lotus in the frieze over the pilaster, the rosettes in the interlocking circles, and the rosettes on the neck of the pilaster capital that have subsequently been replaced).**

**Note the bold relief of the door panels and the carving around each panel.**

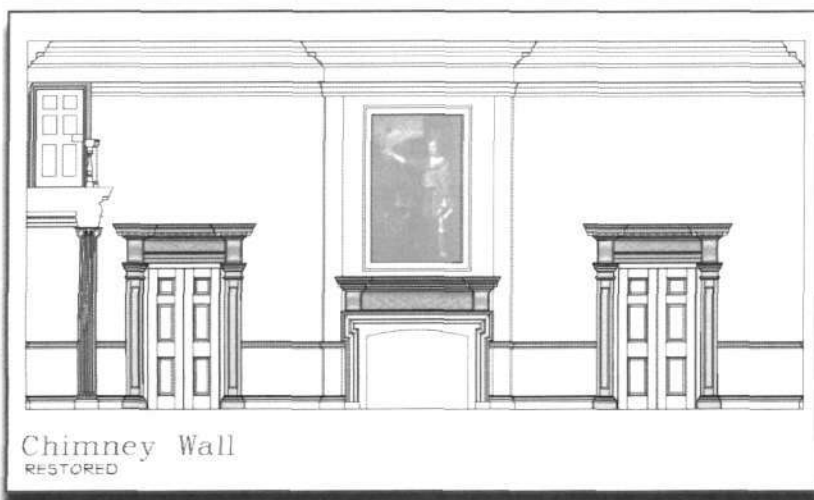
**The HL hinges are 20<sup>th</sup> century; the original were decorative brass barrels with the leaves set in hidden mortises.**



The evidence for doorways in the Old Senate Chamber indicates a wooden element about 14+ inches wide at the jambs. On the wall there is still the imprint of a molded element 90 inches from the floor that corresponds to the capital over the niche pilaster .

If the paneled pilaster of the niche that is 11 inches wide were also at the doors and a 3" backband was added on the inside edge (to allow doors to open wide in spite of the capital), then this would achieve 14" wide trim.

At the false door there is a clear outline of straight line rising vertically above the capital aligned with the outside edge of the pilaster shaft. The plaster area tends to then move horizontally a few inches then generally out at a 45 degree angle implying a plaster overdoor entablature at rests on brackets sitting atop the pilaster capitals.





## Doors Summary

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It appears the three doors to the room were originally trimmed alike. The door to the rotunda, or Great Hall, likely had its formal trim removed in 1792 when a vestibule with baize doors was installed on the room side and risers to seat visitors were built in under the gallery where once the floor had run uninterrupted to the back wall. The 1905 recreation of the gallery misinterpreted the gallery ceiling arrangement thus placing it in a modern relationship that is flush to the bottom of the entablature on the balcony face. As shown in the circa 1868 photograph, the original gallery ceiling was recessed within the structure of the gallery framing as was typical of the period. With a 10'8" +/- clearance from the floor, this opening could have easily accommodated a fully dressed door.

The doors on the chimney wall appear to have retained their original trim until the 1878 remodeling when they received a narrow architrave typical of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance Revival decor that matches most of the other trim in the State House installed at that time. Also in 1878, the door to the Great Hall had the vestibule removed, a very large transom installed, and the whole was trimmed with the same architrave as the other doors. The 1905 restoration team was left with no evidence other than the 1824 John Trumbull painting hanging in the US Capitol. As with so many early restorations, they did not distinguish between Georgian, Federal, or Neo-Classical when designing according to "typical of the period."

The 1905 restoration designed an architrave with decidedly Federal characteristics, in other words, slender trim with delicate moldings and shallow relief. Upon this they sat an overdoor entablature with side brackets as indicated in the Trumbull painting. While Trumbull's proportions are correct for the period, the 1905 recreation was apparently created using standardly-available plaster decoration for the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the available sizes produced an inelegant result. The result is an overdoor that does not match the ghosting that has been uncovered.

The 1905 Restoration Committee did not have access to Trumbull's sketches nor his other painting of the room. The sketches, drawn two years before any of his paintings, show considerably less detail at the doors. Also the similarity in the design of architectural elements across many of Trumbull's paintings, such as the use of the same door trim in his painting of Independence Hall, suggests that his focus was on events and people, not architecture, bringing the value of his paintings for information on these details into serious question. In contrast, his sketches done in the room in the absence of people are more likely to produce valuable architectural information, such as the distinct notations for an "oak leaf" frieze.

In 1940, when the glaring misproportions of the ill-designed 1905 overdoors sparked a re-investigation of documentary evidence, the review committee failed to uncover ghosts on the walls, and without the benefit of Trumbull's sketches, found no justification for overdoors of any sort. The result was removal of the overdoors, leaving behind only inadequate Colonial Revival trim. Even if a simple architrave was appropriate, this replacement trim was just under 6-3/4" wide whereas the original Georgian architrave arching over the niche is much wider and bolder at slightly over nine inches wide and has twice the relief.